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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 003843

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/10/2018  
TAGS: [POL](#) [PGOV](#) [EFIN](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: MUTHANNA'S ONLY PRISON: OVERCROWDED AND  
ILL-EQUIPPED

REF: BAGHDAD 2890

Classified By: PRT Muthanna Team Leader Brad Lynch for reasons 1.4 (b)  
and (d).

[1](#)1. This is a Muthanna PRT reporting cable.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Summary: The PRT's acting Rule of Law (RoL) Advisor conducted an initial capacity and needs assessment at Muthanna's only prison and found an old, overcrowded, and ill-equipped facility. The prison's management is eager to accept coalition training support. However, they have asked that cooperation with the USG be kept confidential to protect staff members who are routinely beaten on their way home from work by prisoners' friends and family. End Summary.

[1](#)3. (SBU) RoL Advisor and a 4-1 Cavalry Brigade Judge Advocate General representative visited Ministry of Justice (MoJ)-run Muthanna Prison in November to assess its condition, capacity, and training needs. The warden was in Baghdad preparing for a training trip to Sweden, so Deputy Warden Moutaz Abid Al-Aziz hosted the meeting. PRT visitors were not allowed to visit the prison cell area on this trip. According to Aziz, only Red Cross/Red Crescent workers or members of the Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR) are granted access to the cells without prior MoJ approval.

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The Prison: Old, Crowded, Poorly Equipped  
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[1](#)4. (SBU) The Muthanna Province prison facility, located in Samawah, houses pre-trial detainees, convicted criminals, juveniles, and women. (Note: According to Iraqi law, MoJ prisons should only house convicted adult criminals. Female convicts should be housed separately, and juveniles should be under Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs custody. End Note.) The structure was built in 1936 and was designed to house 275 prisoners in its 11 cells. Current prison population is 415, including 7 women and 45 juveniles.

[1](#)5. (C) There are 300 employees at the Muthanna Prison, 275 of whom are guards who work on one of three shifts. Recruiting new employees has been difficult because of assaults on guards as they walk home from work by prisoners' friends and family members. According to Aziz, this happens two or three times per month, and some attacks have resulted in fatalities. He stated that coalition assistance would be welcome, but he asked us to keep this cooperation confidential, fearing additional reprisals.

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Needs Identified  
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[1](#)6. (SBU) Aziz prioritized three needs: weapons, training, and health care equipment. The prison has only ten night sticks and five Glock 9mm pistols for its entire guard force. Their staff is poorly trained, and the Deputy Warden asked for the PRT's assistance in this area. We later met with local MPRI

contractors to begin building a training program similar to the one that has been implemented in Dhi Qar Province's prison. The MPRI program is designed to train prison guards in prisoner management techniques. The staff is concerned about medical care for the prison population, and Aziz identified tooth extraction as their number one medical issue. We were not able to ascertain during the visit whether the prison has a functioning medical clinic.

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Comment  
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[17](#). (C) This was our first engagement with the Muthanna prison system, and we found an eager partner in Deputy Warden Aziz. The PRT and the 4/1 CAV will partner with the Warden and his staff to help build capacity in Muthanna's correction system.

Reftel addresses similar overcrowding and facility concerns throughout southern and central Iraq. End comment.

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